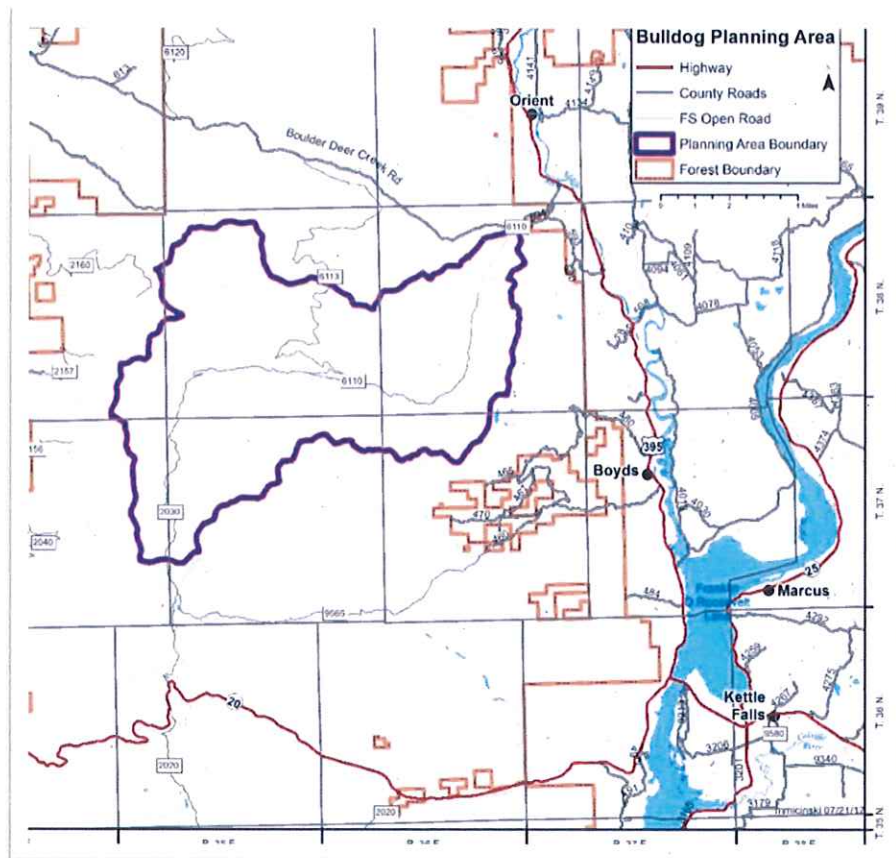




File Code: 1950
Date: May 10, 2018

Greetings,

The Three Rivers Ranger District is beginning the process to analyze restoration activities on the Bulldog Project. This project area is about 44,000 acres, and is located on the Colville National Forest about 15 miles to the north and west of Kettle Falls, WA. Generally, this project is located west of highway 395, south of the Boulder-Deer Highway, and north of South Fork Boulder Creek. We would like to share our proposed activities while in the early stages of planning to encourage comment and identify issues or opportunities that are important for consideration during analysis.



Purpose and Need for this Project and Direction for Forest Management

The purpose and need includes four objectives:

1. Restore forest conditions, by moving them toward the historic range of variability.
2. Reduce hazardous fuels to meet wildland urban interface (WUI) objectives in the Ferry County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and to compartmentalize the landscape along strategically important road systems and ridgelines to allow firefighters to actively engage in fire management activities in a safe and strategic manner.
3. Restore aquatic systems to improve function and resilience to disturbance.
4. Improve recreational opportunities to better align with desired public uses. These opportunities focus on motorized and non-motorized needs, access to key locations, and safety considerations for forest users.

The purpose and need for this project was developed through consideration of current conditions when compared to desired conditions from the Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, the Ferry County CWPP, collaborative public input, legislation that established the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), and other relevant direction. We identified the possible project activities contained in the proposed action below based on the departure of conditions in this landscape, along with collaborative input received during conversations with representatives from the Ferry County Board of Commissioners, the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, and the Tri-County Motorized Recreation Association.

Proposed Action

Activities have been identified to address each of the four focus areas of the purpose and need. This project would include many of the typical forest restoration, fuel reduction, and aquatic restoration activities that have been part of our recent projects like Sherman, Deer Jasper, and Orient. What makes this project different is that we are interested in including some activities to improve recreational opportunities.

The proposed activities below are organized by project objective. The activities for forest restoration and fuels reduction are shown together since these two objectives are so closely linked. For your convenience, page 5 provides definitions of the forest restoration and fuels activities.

Restore Forest Conditions and Reduce Hazardous Fuels

There are opportunities to for up to 7,000 acres of commercial treatments and 8,000 acres of non-commercial fuels and thinning treatments.

- Commercial thinning
- Regeneration harvest
- Fuel breaks along strategic roads
- Pre-commercial thinning
- Ladder fuel reduction thinning
- Dead tree felling
- Underburning
- Piling and pile burning
- Lop and scatter (decompose)
- Site preparation for reforestation
- Reforestation (planting and natural)
- Aspen enhancement

- Hand and machine fire-line construction
- Leave tops attached (slash management)

Restoring Aquatic Systems

- Road maintenance (including culvert replacements for aquatic passage)
- System road decommissioning
- Restoration of non-system roads (including hydrologic stabilization)

Improve Recreational Opportunities

- Designate a motorized loop trail connection for the Thompson Ridge Trail #107.
- Designate and develop a motorized trailhead on the north end of the Thompson Ridge Trail #107 off FR 6110100.
- Designate and enlarge the motorized trailhead for US Spur Trail #12600.
- Designate and develop a motorized trailhead for the Mack-King #98 and Twin Sisters #109 motorized trails off FR2030.
- Convert non-motorized US Mountain Trail #76 to motorized use and expand tread to ATV width. Extend trail #76 through new construction to FR 9565800 (Alligator Ridge) which could loop back to Twin Sisters or Mack King trails for an additional loop ride. Open Albion Hill Road 2030 to motorized mixed use between Mack King/Twin Sisters trails and US Spur Trail #12600.
- Develop and enhance pull outs and turn arounds on forest system roads for parking and vehicles towing trailers, using landings as available, especially along FRs 2030 (Albion Hill), 6110 (South Fork Boulder Creek), and 6113 (Bulldog Cabin).
- Designate and improve the Tom Creek section of Taylor Ridge Trail #74.
- Eliminate motorized access to the Taylor Ridge Trail #74 from the Indian Creek Road #6110430.

Further information about activities relating to roads:

- Road maintenance would take place on Forest Service system roads that are needed for project implementation or are causing resource damage. The intent of all road maintenance would be to provide necessary access for safe and efficient access while reducing soil erosion and sedimentation, the possibility of road failures, as well as other detrimental resource damage.
- Road decommissioning would be considered on a road by road basis for roads that are causing resource damage and are not needed for future management or key recreational access.
- Temporary road construction would take place on existing road templates to access commercial treatment units. To the fullest extent possible, existing non-system roads, old skid trails, and other previously impacted areas would be reused. Temporary roads would not be maintained as part of the Forest road system after project completion, and will be returned to a hydrologically stable condition.
- The opening of closed roads and the closing of open roads will be considered for Forest Service system roads in the project area if the interdisciplinary team analysis shows a need.

Invitation to Comment on the Proposal

Your comments are important to help identify possible activities and to set an appropriate level of analysis. Comments will be considered and used to identify issues associated with the proposal, which could lead to alternatives or mitigation measures, so it's most helpful if you can keep them as specific as possible. All comments will become a matter of public record. We expect to commence analysis of this project soon, and expect the draft analysis available for review and a formal public comment by the summer of 2019. At that time, there will be an opportunity to comment again on the specifics of the analysis.

Written or verbal comments are both welcome and while we are always interested in public input, comments will be most useful if received by June 8, 2018. Written comments can be sent or delivered to: Joshua White, Three Rivers District Ranger, 255 West 11th, Kettle Falls, WA 99141. The district office is open between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

If it is more convenient to use email, you can address comments to: comments-pacificnorthwest-colville-threerivers@fs.fed.us. Please put "Bulldog Scoping Comments" in the subject line of your email. If you have any questions, additional information can be provided by James Pass, Environmental Coordinator, at 509-738-7700.

Thank you for your interest in the management of your National Forest, and your participation in this project.

Sincerely,



JOSHUA P. WHITE
District Ranger

Definitions

Aspen enhancement: cutting conifers trees that compete with aspen stands.

Commercial harvest: cutting and removing merchantable conifer trees.

Commercial thinning: commercial harvest that leaves a fully stocked stand. It is used to control density, modify forest structure, and favor desired trees.

Dead tree felling: cutting live and dead trees up to 10 inches in diameter in areas where there are dead trees from fire or mountain pine beetle.

Fire-line construction: creating a break in ground fuels to prevent the spread of fire and to support a controlled underburn. Fire-lines can be created by hand or with machine.

Fuel break: strips or blocks of vegetation that have been altered to slow or control a fire.

Ladder fuel reduction thinning: cutting of understory non-commercial sized trees with the goal of removing ladder fuels.

Leave tops attached: a form of slash management used during harvest where the smaller tops of trees, along with branch wood, are removed from the site with the whole tree and piled at a landing.

Lop and scatter: a form of slash management where limbs and tops of trees are cut and spread to reduce fuel bed depth and to speed up decomposition.

Merchantable trees: trees with commercial value. Typically this includes trees over 5 inches in diameter.

Piling: gathering surface fuel for burning. Surface fuel would include slash from thinning along with some existing natural woody debris. Piling would be by hand or machine and ignited by hand under safe conditions.

Pre-commercial thinning: cutting of trees less than 7 inches in diameter within plantations that do not have enough commercial value to treat with a commercial harvest.

Reforestation: planting or culturing for a mix of native species in regeneration harvest openings.

Regeneration harvest: a commercial harvest that creates growing areas for the regeneration of conifers and hardwoods. This is used in areas with conditions such as disease, insect attack, low tree vigor, or departed species mixes.

Site preparation: machine piling, brush raking, hand piling, whip felling, and/or underburning to prepare an area for reforestation.

Underburning: igniting fuels during predetermined burning conditions to reintroduce fire into the ecosystem, reduce surface fuel loading, prepare seed beds for natural and planted regeneration, and improve wildlife habitat and browse conditions.